



Technology evolves, and so has the Iowa Communications Network

Created 20 years ago for distance learning, no one could envision how critical the state-wide fiber optic Network backbone would be today. The video service is only a small part of what the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) has become. ICN provides Internet and data bandwidth to schools, hospitals, public safety, state/federal government entities, and for the statewide 911 system at levels that in many cases would not be available if the Network backbone did not exist.

The ICN's fiber optic network continues to be a model for other states. The recent enhancements to the Network with federal funds allows for the Network to have capacity to provide dedicated bandwidth for the Iowa Rural Health Telecommunications Program (lead by the Iowa Hospital Association), public safety, homeland security, and the growing needs of the education system.

ICN is aware that the traditional video classrooms have aged, but the video equipment in those rooms is owned by the schools or other authorized users, not the ICN. ICN is diligently working to move the traditional video platform to incorporate an internet based video experience. Although the traditional usage is down from the original inception, there are still over 134,000 hours per year of video sessions being conducted over the Network.

ICN partners with the Board of Regents universities to purchase Internet at an extremely discounted rate. The low rate enables authorized users of the Network to obtain affordable Internet service. The ICN recently provided an opportunity for education users to double their Internet bandwidth with no change in their monthly cost.

Certified users (area education agencies, community colleges, or regents institution) have always had a choice between ICN and a private provider in their community and are permitted

to submit waivers if ICN services are either unavailable or can be purchased at a lower rate. Many certified users decide to continue to receive the ICN services with reliable connectivity of 99.999% uptime for Ethernet and voice services on the fiber optic infrastructure.

ICN runs the state-wide Network, which often exceeds 70 percent utilization, with 81 employees and has not received a general fund appropriation since Fiscal Year 2004 for the operation of the Network. Although ICN's annual report shows a loss, the financial statements are shown using Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

As a government entity in a fee-for-service environment, ICN uses accrual accounting with a measurement focus emphasizing the matching of revenues with costs of services, including depreciation of assets such as network equipment and fiber. Most other State of Iowa agencies use the modified accrual accounting method with a measurement focus emphasizing control and accountability over the raising and spending of public moneys.

To more accurately compare ICN's financial position with other State of Iowa agencies, a Budget to Actual report is prepared to show the cash to be received and spent during the year.

Originally used primarily for distance learning, the State's fiber optic Network has evolved into providing critical communications not originally thought of 20 years ago. When a rural hospital submits an MRI for a second opinion in minutes as opposed to hours, or a public safety officer calls for back-up by radio, or a 911 dispatcher receives an emergency call; all of this communication travels on what now makes up today's Iowa Communications Network.

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